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EPIC ARCHITECTURE:
ARCHITECTURAL TERMINOLOGY AND THE CITIES OF BETHLEHEM
AND JERUSALEM IN THE EPICS OF JUVENCUS AND PROBA*

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Soon after Constantine's seizure of power, splendid basilicas were built in Rome and the Holy Land.¹ Constantine had created the conditions necessary for the emergence of a rich Christian architecture. At the same time, Christian poetry now also fully emerged. The first classicizing yet openly Christian poets – Juvencus and Proba – took the Roman epic tradition and in particular Vergil as their main literary examples. In this tradition – and also in Rome's national epic the *Aeneid* – monuments played an important role.² Moreover, the *Aeneid* ultimately told the story of the foundation of Rome.

Juvencus and Proba, however, wrote epics about Christian content. In the New Testament two cities fulfilled a particular role: Bethlehem and Jerusalem, marking the beginning and end of Christ's stay on earth. Consequently, these cities were also mentioned in biblical epic. In this article I will investigate the way in which Bethlehem and Jerusalem were represented in early Christian epic and the use of architectural vocabulary. As a result, this article will throw light on Christian (poetic) notions of the world of architecture in the burgeoning culture of Latin Christianity.

The Innovation of Christian Poetry: Juvencus and Proba

The Spanish presbyter Juvencus is generally acknowledged as the founding father of a tradition of Christian poetry well versed in the classicizing literature.³ In 329, he wrote a versification of the four gospels (hereafter *euang.*) in which he put (mainly) Matthean stories about Christ in chronological order. In his epic, Vergilian references abound.

One of the salient characteristics of Juvencus's poetry is that, as part of his endeavour to ap-

pear as classical as possible while treating biblical content, he omitted many references to Jewish culture, including topographical details.⁴ He was anxious not to alienate his Rome-oriented audience in a poem that was a daunting literary innovation. Words referring to the world of architecture, however, are certainly not absent from his epic.⁵ Most of them can be explained by remarks in the biblical text of the gospels: they either denote (groups of) dwellings, graves, 'spiritual' buildings outside the world of earthly *realia*, or function as building metaphors.

The first poet to follow Juvencus was the poetess Faltonia Betitia Proba, who wrote a cento in the middle of the fourth century in Rome.⁶ Proba is the only female poet of Late Antiquity of whom a substantial work remains.⁷ Her cento consisted exclusively of verses and parts of verses from Vergil. As a consequence, the clarity of her work suffered from the restrictions imposed by the genre. Proba re-arranged the Vergilian elements in such a manner that a new poem appeared, or rather, as she put it herself, she revealed the hidden order of Vergil's oeuvre, which she believed to be about Christ.⁸ The cento mainly treated the story of Creation and events from the life of Christ.

Although different in several respects, both epics are clearly connected through Vergilian influences, generic conventions, biblical content and their innovative character. Moreover, they both mention the cities of Bethlehem and Jerusalem, as will be explained below.

Bethlehem

This place is evidently closely connected to the Birth of Christ (see Matthew 2. 1; Luke 2. 1–7) in the New Testament. However, the small village is also presented as the city of David (Luke 2. 4;

11) and already referred to in the Old Testament as the future birthplace of the Messiah (see Micah 5. 1, referred to in Matthew 2. 3–6 and John 7. 42). Bethlehem is also the place where Herod killed all children younger than two years old (Matthew 2. 16–18).

In Juvencus's versification of the preamble to these events, the humble dwellings of Zachariah and Elisabeth and Mary are mentioned by the neutral word *domus*, although in *euang.*, 1. 55, Mary's house is referred to with the more poetic *tecta*.⁹ This word is part of a rare digression (compared to the biblical model text) on Juvencus's part, in which he describes the life of Mary before the Annunciation and emphasises her virginity (vv. 1. 54–56).¹⁰ The name of Bethlehem was too important for Juvencus to leave out, despite his general dislike of Hebrew names.¹¹ Luke's reference to King David is also maintained (Luke 2. 4; *euang.* 1. 149; 151).¹² Juvencus's rendering of the story emphasises the justification for Bethlehem as the birthplace of the son of God (vv. 1. 149; 153–54):

Urbs est Iudaeae Bethleem, Davida canorum
quae genuit
[...]
Hospitio amborum Bethleem sub moenibus
urbis
angusti fuerant praeparua habitacula ruris.

(There is a city, Bethlehem of Judea, which brought forth David of the psalms [...]. Under the walls of Bethlehem, small huts of the poor countryside had become lodging for both of them.)

We are informed that Bethlehem was a city (*urbs*; cf. *euang.* 1. 149) with walls (*moenia*), a feature that is stressed again in vv. 236 and 238.¹³ More detailed descriptions are lacking.¹⁴ The existence of *moenia* around Bethlehem is implied in 2 Chronicles 11. 6. Moreover, several testimonies confirm that Bethlehem was walled in Late Antiquity, although it was a small village and it is not known when the walls were constructed. The walls were rather unimpressive.¹⁵ The interest of the Constantinian house in the city of Bethlehem, apparent from the construction of the Church of the Nativity, might have contrib-

uted to Juvencus's knowledge of Bethlehem's walls (if they already existed in his days) or to his willingness to grant the small town with city walls. Another reason for Juvencus to mention them might have been Bethlehem's important role in the history of salvation.¹⁶ The nexus *sub moenibus urbis* stood in a short, but significant poetic tradition.¹⁷ Other instances of the use of *moenia* in Juvencus refer mostly to Jerusalem. In a few cases they indicate the town of Sychar (in the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, John 4. 1–42) or they are used metaphorically.¹⁸

Bethlehem is contrasted with the humbleness of its surroundings by the addition of a diminutive prefix in *praeparua* and the diminutive form *habitacula* (*euang.* 1. 154). This is also the term for the place to which the star leads the Magi in their quest for the newborn king (*euang.* 1. 245). *Habitacula* is almost exclusively used by Christian writers and occurs frequently in the Vulgate (e.g. in Proverbs 3. 33 for the houses of the just). It is attested only once in Latin poetry before Juvencus.¹⁹

The most important Bethlehem building – the stable of the Saviour's birth – is not mentioned explicitly, but is one of the *praeparua habitacula*: there (*illic*, *euang.* 1. 155) Christ was born.

This reference to a place of birth is completely absent in Proba's account of the story (vv. 338–63, but only vv. 338–42 refer to the birth proper), which includes the arrival of the Magi and Herod's wrath. In her version of the Massacre of the Innocents (vv. 364–71), however, Proba refers to a hitherto unspecified *urbs* (v. 368), which is filled with terror.²¹ At the entrances of the houses (*limine primo*, v. 371) the children are slaughtered in front of their parents' eyes (vv. 370–71). The *praeparua habitacula* of Juvencus are mirrored in Proba's description of the place of refuge found by Mary and her child (Joseph is omitted from her account) in Egypt: *hic natum angusti subter fastigia tecti | nutribat* (vv. 375–76): 'here she fed her child under the roof of a small dwelling'.²² The *angusti fastigia tecti* is taken from *Aeneid* VIII. 366, where it describes the humble residence of Euander in which Aeneas stays for the night. The Trojan hero is implicitly compared to Christ more often in Proba's cento. Proba

mentions these circumstances, added vis-à-vis the biblical text, only after the massacre, as to emphasize the contrast with the peaceful mother and child.²³

Jerusalem

The other most important city of the New Testament is definitively Jerusalem. The position of the city is ambiguous in the Bible as well as among early Christian thinkers.²⁴ Its main role in the gospels is that of the place of Christ's death and resurrection. Other major events that are described in the New Testament are the presentation in the Temple (Luke 2. 22–40), Jesus teaching in the Temple (Luke 2. 41–51), the entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21. 9–10), the cleansing of the Temple (Matthew 21. 12–13) and the prediction of the destruction of both Jerusalem (Luke 19. 41–44) and its Temple (Matthew 24. 1–2). Clearly, the Temple is presented as the most important building of the city.

In vv. 566–70 of Proba's cento, the Temple is mentioned in a remarkable (and rare) ecphrasis:

Iamque propinquabant portis templumque uetustum
antiqua e cedro centum sublime columnis
ingreditur, magna medius comitante caterua,
horrendum siluis: hoc illis curia templum,
hae sacrae sedes, miro quod honore colebant.

(And already they approached the gates and the old temple, sublime through its hundred columns from old cedar. He enters it in the midst of a large crowd that accompanies him. It was wonderful with its woodwork! This temple was their meeting place, this holy dwelling, which they worshipped with remarkable reverence.)

In this context, the Temple is denoted three times with the word *templum* (v. 566; 569; 571). In other verses, Proba uses *domus*²⁵ and *sedes*.²⁶ *Templum* was of course the generic word for pagan temples (and is used as such in v. 491), but also a common word to denote the Temple in Jerusalem. The two notions are taken together

by Proba in v. 566, which borrows *templumque uetustum* from *Aeneid* II. 713; in the latter passage, it describes an old temple for Ceres, now deserted, where Aeneas and his family plan to meet their servants after their flight from burning Troy. At first sight, it may seem no coincidence that the main symbol of the old religion of the Jews, now become obsolete, according to Christians, due to Christ's coming, is compared to a deserted temple outside a burning city. Moreover, the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed in the year AD 70 and not rebuilt.

However, a few decades before Proba, Eusebius still referred to the grandeur of the Temple of Jerusalem to justify the Cathedral of Paulinus in Tyre.²⁷ Verse 567 in particular reflects this tradition of the Temple as a symbol of magnificence. The hundred columns evoked by Proba – originally referring to the palace of Latinus (v. 567 consists of parts of *Aeneid*, VII. 178 and VII. 170) – add a 'feeling of monumentality and wealth'.²⁸ However, they do not correspond to historical reality.²⁹ But historical reality was not Proba's goal, nor was it in her readers' interest, even more so since the (remains of the) Temple of Jerusalem never became a popular place of pilgrimage in the Christian world.³⁰ The cedar is mentioned in the *Aeneid* as the material for wooden statues of ancestors. However, Proba and her readers were probably first and foremost reminded of the cedars from Lebanon, which were frequently mentioned in the Old Testament and used for the construction of the Temple.³¹

The word *domus* (v. 443) is used in Proba's account of the temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4. 1–11), where Satan challenges Christ to leap from the *pinna templi* (Matthew 4. 5). In the original context of *Aeneid* x. 526 *est domus alta* refers to the house of Magus, piled with riches, as this Latin warrior tells Aeneas (who kills him nevertheless). The only similarity between the two contexts seems to be the opulence of the buildings.³²

In Juvenecus's epic, the Temple of Jerusalem occurs frequently.³³ Of the 32 instances in which he uses the word *templum*, it refers to another structure only once.³⁴ In *euang.* II. 733 Juvenecus turns Matthew's *exiit Iesus* (Matthew

13. 1) into *progreditur templo terrarum lumen Iesus*. But which *templum* is meant? Whereas Jesus was in a synagogue according to Matthew 12. 9 ('et inde transiens uenit in synagogam eorum'), he left it afterwards (Matthew 12. 15: 'Iesus autem sciens secessit inde') and no other location is specified. According to Jerome, commenting on Matthew 13. 1, Christ was in his own house.³⁵ Although Juvencus follows the biblical account of Matthew 12. 9 (II. 583–84: 'tunc conuenticula ipsorum post talia dicta | ingreditur'), but also 12.15 (II. 599–600: 'Christus | discedit'), he seems to assume that Jesus is still in the *conuenticula* (which is the synagogue) in 2. 733 (whereas Matthew only makes clear that he was inside a building (his family awaits him outside, *foris*, in Matthew 12. 46). *Conuenticulum* in Juvencus occurs only here and in fact nowhere else in classical and early Christian Latin poetry. With this calque Juvencus avoids using the non-Roman word *synagoga*.³⁶ In most cases he just mentions no such a place at all in his versification.³⁷

In several passages, Juvencus refers to the walls (*moenia*) of Jerusalem:³⁸ *euang.* I. 383, III. 586 (where Christ calls the walls *truculenta*, 'grim', while predicting his fate), III. 641; in *euang.*, IV. 87, *moenia* refers to the Temple. In *euang.*, I. 383, the clause *moenibus urbis* (cf. *euang.*, I. 353 discussed above) is used again instead of the biblical *in sanctam ciuitatem* (i.e. Jerusalem; Matthew 4. 5), in the versification of the temptation in the wilderness. Similarly, the *Solymorum moenia* (*euang.*, III. 641) replace the Matthean *Hierosolyma* (Matthew 21. 10) in the story of the entry into Jerusalem. In Matthew 24. 1–2, Jesus predicts the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem. This passage is versified in *euang.*, IV. 86–90. Whereas Christ points his disciples to the *structura templi*, Juvencus is more explicit and mentions the 'praecelsa [...] | moenia' (86–87): again the walls of Jerusalem are highlighted by the poet. Although an ecphrasis of the city is lacking, in conformity with Juvencus's general versifying principles, the poet does transpose the neutral 'Videtis haec omnia' of Matthew 24. 2, into the more elaborate 'Haec operum uobis miracula digna videntur | obtutu stupido' ('You consider these marvellous works worthy

of an astonished gaze'). Via references to Vergil, the walls are compared to the ruinous walls of Troy.³⁹ In biblical imagery the walls of Jerusalem are often referred to metaphorically and this metaphor was taken up in Late Antiquity. Not only were walls an unavoidable element of epic cities in Juvencus's view, he was probably also reminded of biblical reminiscences.⁴⁰

A biblical passage in which the building of the Temple is mentioned several times is that of the cleansing of the Temple in John 2. 13–25. Juvencus deliberately chose to include this story in his epic (*euang.*, II. 153–76), since he generally follows the gospel of Matthew. In the gospel the Temple is indicated with the words *templum* (five times) and *domus* (twice); in Juvencus with *templum* (thrice), *aedes* and *delubrum*. The poet emphasizes the holiness of the place by adding *sancta* to *aedes* (*euang.*, II. 159) and *uenerabile* to *templum* (*euang.*, II. 166). *Delubrum*, a word with strong pagan connotations, is used on one other occasion, in *euang.* I. 188.⁴¹ It is part of a passage (*euang.*, I. 185–88 = Luke 2. 23–24) where a law from the Book of Leviticus (12. 1–8) is recalled: one should bring an offering to the tabernacle after the birth of a child. In Luke this place is not specified. Juvencus translates the old prescription more concretely to the time of Christ and mentions the Temple.⁴² The use of these different words seems to be explained by a pursuit of variation.⁴³ The word *aedes* is otherwise mostly used in the versification of parables.⁴⁴

One remarkable and rather unique architectural detail that Juvencus adds to his biblical example remains: that of the famous Palace of Solomon mentioned in vv. I. 644–45: 'cum regni diuitis aula | aflueret' ('because the palace abounded in the riches of the kingdom'). The word *aula* has no equivalent in the corresponding gospel text (Matthew 6. 29): 'Dico autem uobis, quoniam nec Solomon in omni gloria sua coopertus est sicut unum ex istis'. Similar to Juvencus's mentioning of the walls of Jerusalem, the *aula* seems to be added as a symbol of power and wealth.

Art and the Poets

Although this inventory cannot be exhaustive, a survey of other architectural terms in Juvenecus and Proba reveals that the general pattern remains the same. No buildings are specifically highlighted. This situation is reflected in contemporary early Christian art. There too, the places of Bethlehem and Jerusalem are the only biblical places that are recognisable, albeit not so much through their architectural features. The stable in which Christ is born is depicted on sarcophagi, but visualisations of Bethlehem itself (as a tower) only appear by the end of the fourth century; it is the Church of the Gentiles contrasted to the similarly depicted Church of the Jews that is Jerusalem.⁴⁵ Similarly, the so-called city gate sarcophagi only appear later in the fourth century. Incidentally, buildings are plainly depicted as for example on four sarcophagi with the story of Peter and the dog of Simon Magus and a unique sarcophagus from Gerona with scenes from the story of Susanna.⁴⁶ In the frequently depicted Raising of Lazarus, however, the man's grave was always indicated. City walls were often shown in late antique art (although most examples are from later periods) to refer to cities.⁴⁷ In general, however, the poets' lack of interest in architecture is reflected in that of the producers of early Christian art and vice versa.

Conclusion

The cities of Bethlehem and Jerusalem are among the most important cities mentioned in the early biblical epics. Architectural terms are certainly not absent, but their use never results in extensive descriptions of buildings or places. Slight adaptations that could be detected aim at exalting structures and palaces that were connected with the life of Christ or at a general 'epicising' of the biblical content. Although building metaphors abound in Juvenecus, due to the many gospel parables in which they are used, nor he, nor Proba expand on them for other purposes. Architectural vocabulary seems to be chosen for matters of variety rather than consistency.

The Roman epic tradition accounted for much more interest in architecture. By contrast, Juvenecus's statement that nothing is immortal, not even *aurea Roma* (*praeformatio* 2) is telling. New, really immortal matters were addressed: in the initial phase of the development of a Christian poetical language in Christian poetry it was not yet the time for *ornamenta terrestria* (*euang.*, IV. 805) that included architectural features. Early Christian visual culture shows a similar pattern. Only at the end of the fourth century, when Christians felt their cultural norms gradually took over (clearly with preservation of much from Antiquity), there was room for a more successful confluence of poetry and architecture.

Notes

* I would like to thank Dr Erik Hermans (Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, NYU) for correcting my English.

1 Initially, modesty was central to Christian views on architecture, but after Constantine this view changed rapidly, as is apparent, for instance, in the life and works of poet-architects such as Ambrose and Paulinus of Nola, see Claire Sotinel, 'Les lieux de culte chrétiens et le sacré dans l'Antiquité tardive', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 4 (2005), 411-34 (p. 427 in particular). Cf. Sible de Blaauw, 'Pralende schijn in vroegchristelijke kerkgebouwen?', in *Romeinse decadentie: Pracht en praal in de Romeinse keizertijd*, ed. by Stephan Mols and others (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2008), pp. 129-42.

2 See e.g. Elisabeth Henry, 'Virgil and the Monuments', *Proceedings of the Virgil Society*, 18 (1986), 19-45.

Cf. Brent Gareth Hannah, 'Exegi monumentum: Architecture in Epic' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Cornell University, 2007), pp. 189-90: 'In an age in which architecture was a primary means by which state ideology, and popular culture and taste, were disseminated, the poets of the day explored the various facets of monumentality to examine critically the nature of their own art and its relationship to the society in which it was situated'.

3 To be sure, several authors preceded him, Commodianus probably even by eighty years. Optatianus Porphyrius and the author of the *Laudes Domini* wrote in the same period, Juvenecus was already in Late Antiquity considered the first Christian poet: see Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita Martini*, I. 14-15. For Juvenecus, see e.g. Roger P. H. Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament: Juvenecus, Sedulius, Arator* (Oxford: Oxford

- University Press, 2006), pp. 1–134 and – most recently – Scott McGill, *Juvenius' Four Books of the Gospels: Evangeliorum libri IV* (London: Routledge, 2016), which appeared too late to include in this article.
- 4 See Ilona Opelt, 'Die Szenerie bei Juvenius: Ein Kapitel historischer Geographie', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 29 (1975), 191–207. Jean-Michel Poinssotte, *Juvenius et Israël: la représentation des juifs dans le premier poème latin chrétien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979) stressed the anti-semitic nature of this feature, but Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament*, pp. 105–12 rightly nuances this.
- 5 Architectural terms and words referring to buildings and dwellings found in his epic are *adytum*, *aedes*, *atrium*, *aula*, *castellum*, *conuenticulum*, *delubrum*, *domus*, *foris*, *habitationum*, *limen*, *moenia*, *murus*, *oppidum*, *porta*, *sedes*, *sepulcrum*, *tecta*, *templum*, *tentorium*, *tumulus*, *turris* and *urbs*. Proba has *columna*, *domus*, *foris*, *limen*, *sedes*, *sepulcrum*, *tecta*, *templum* and *urbs*. Search terms were based on Heinrich Laag, *Kleines Wörterbuch der frühchristlichen Kunst und Archäologie* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2006), with additions.
- 6 On Proba, see most recently Sigrid Schottenius Cullhed, *Proba the Prophet: The Christian Virgilian Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015); some critical remarks in Gottfried Kreuz, 'Review of Sigrid Schottenius Cullhed, *Proba the Prophet: The Christian Virgilian Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba*', *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*, 20 (2016), 197–202. On Juvenius and Proba together, see Wolfgang Kirsch, *Die lateinische Versepeik des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Akademie, 1989), pp. 84–150.
- 7 For the position of women writers in Antiquity, see Jane Stevenson, '1: Antiquity and Late Antiquity' in *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender, & Authority from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 31–82 (pp. 64–71 on Proba).
- 8 *Cento Probae* xxiii: 'Vergilium cecinisse loquar pia munera Christi'. Text: Proba, *Cento vergilianus*, ed. by Alessia Fassina and Carlo M. Lucarini (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2015).
- 9 On *domus*: *euang.*, i. 47; i. 81; i. 89 (Zachariah) and i. 104 (Mary). The word *tecta* is used more often by Juvenius than *domus* (twenty-six and twenty-two instances respectively). In most cases it refers to a specific house mentioned in the gospels or to houses in general.
- 10 v. 55 *caste*, cf. *casto* in v. 70. Cf. Poinssotte, *Juvenius et Israël*, p. 99: 'Où est la fidélité de celui qui "suit à pas" l'Évangile?', referring to Jerome's judgement on Juvenius (*IV evangelia hexametris uersibus paene ad uerbum transferens*, *De uiris illustribus* 84). Juvenius, *Juvenio: Historia evangelica*, transl. by Miguel Castillo Bejarano (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1998), pp. 65–66, n. 16, suggests that a house of virgins waiting for their marriage is meant, which would have been common in Late Antiquity. Herman Hendrik Kievits, 'Ad Iuvenius evangeliorum librum primum commentarius exegeticus' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 1940) at verse 55 refers to Martial, *Ep.*, i. 70. 4, but this is the house of the Vestal virgins in Rome (see e.g. Peter Howell, *A commentary on Book one of the Epigrams of Martial* (London: Athlone, 1980) a.l.) and thus not exactly comparable to the house of a young woman in Palestine.
- 11 Cf. Poinssotte, *Juvenius et Israël*, p. 43: 'Quant aux villes et aux lieux indissolublement unis aux sommets de la vie du Messie, leurs noms constituent le trésor de la tradition sacrée. Ils sont trop chrétiens, pourrait-on dire, pour être encore, de quelque manière, juifs'. Besides Bethlehem, the same is evidently true for Jerusalem. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 40: the name of Bethlehem is omitted two out of six mentions and that of Jerusalem only four out of twenty-two in Juvenius's epic.
- 12 King David is the Old Testament character mentioned by far most often in Juvenius's epic: Poinssotte, *Juvenius et Israël*, p. 48.
- 13 The word *urbs* is normally used for towns with walls. It does not necessarily mean a big city as opposed to a smaller *oppidum* (see Aegidius Forcellini and others, *Lexicon totius latinitatis cum appendicibus*, s.v. *urbs* II.3 (Padua: Typis seminariis, 1940), but combined with the mentioning of the walls the impression remains that Bethlehem is more than a little town of shepherds. In Luke 2. 4 and 2. 11 the Itala indicates the city with the word *ciuitas* (edition: New Testament, *Itala: das Neue Testament in altlateinischer Überlieferung*, ed. by Adolf Jülicher (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1963), which is consistently used for biblical texts throughout this article). Nazareth is also called *urbs* by Juvenius (*euang.*, iii. 17), equally Sychar (ii. 248; ii. 272; ii. 298).
- 14 See also Opelt, p. 202.
- 15 One of the rare sources on buildings in early Christian Bethlehem other than the Church of the Nativity is Bellarmino Bagatti, *Gli antichi edifici sacri di Betlemme in seguito agli scavi e restauri praticati dalla custodia di terra santa (1948–51)* (Gerusalemme: tipografia dei PP. Francescani, 1952), pp. 231–65: he notices that most ancient and medieval authors are silent on Bethlehem 'perchè non trovarono cose rimarchevoli da segnalare' (p. 231). The most ancient source is ps.-Eucherius, *De Situ Hierosolimitanae Urbis* 11 ('Bethlehem [...] quae humili muro et absque turribus angustissimo spatio circumdatur'), written before 450. Two other ancient sources are: Procopius, *De aedificiis* v. 9. 12, about Justinian's restoration of the wall, and Adomnanus of Iona, *De locis sanctis* ii. 1. 4 ('humilis sine turribus murus'; cf. Beda Venerabilis, *De locis sanctis* 7), dated around 680–88. For dating and context of both ps.-Eucherius and Adomnanus see Maria Guagnano, *Adomnani di Iona. I luoghi santi* (Edipuglia: Bari, 2008), pp. 25; 46–49 on Eucherius.

- 16 Cf. Jerome's remarks regarding the place: Paul Antin, 'La ville chez saint Jérôme' in his *Recueil sur saint Jérôme* (Brussels: Latomus, 1968), pp. 375–89.
- 17 Cf. Opelt, p. 194. *Sub moenibus urbis* was used three times before Juvenecus. The original context does not seem to play a role: an unspecified city in Vergil's *Georgics* (IV. 193), Laurentum, the city of Turnus, in the *Aeneid* (XII. 116) and Troy in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (XIII. 261).
- 18 *Moenia* in the context of Jerusalem: *euang.*, I. 383; III. 291; III. 586; III. 641; III. 674 (the walls of the temple); IV. 87 (idem); IV. 709, Sychar: II. 248; II. 250; II. 298 and in a metaphorical way: I. 717; III. 280; III. 534; III. 750.
- 19 See *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae Online* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2009), s.v.
- 20 with Commodianus, *Instr.*, I. 45. 12 (the houses of the pious after the Last Judgement) from the middle of the third century. Jean-Michel Poinssotte, *Commodien: Instructions* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2009), 340 a.l. emphasizes the positive connotations of the word and mentions Proverbs 3. 33. Juvenecus himself also uses the term metaphorically for the house of an impure spirit (II. 718) and the heart of Herod (III. 41), and once in a more literal sense for the houses of a village (*castellum*) in front of Jerusalem (v. III. 625).
- 21 The word *urbis* is also used as a generic term for towns in Galilee in her cento: vv. 383 and 456 (cf. v. 7 for cities in general).
- 22 Proba uses *tecta* also once for towns in Galilee (v. 384) and once for the houses of Jerusalem (v. 444), cf. n. 22. It has been argued that a rather unique influence of apocryphal writings (*i.e.* the *protoevangelium Jacobi*) can be detected in Proba's account of the flight into Egypt, but this has been contested: see Fassina and Lucarini, *Cento Vergilianus*, p. cxvi.
- 23 For the remarkable role of Mary in Proba's cento see Stratis Kyriakidis, 'Eve and Mary: Proba's Technique in the Creation of Two Different Female Figures', *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici*, 29 (1992), 121–53; Antonia Badini and Antonia Rizzi, *Proba: Il centone* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2011), pp. 182–85 and Cullhed, pp. 163–68. It is tempting to link Mary's significant role to the construction of a basilica on the spot of the later S. Maria Maggiore in Rome under Bishop Liberius, more or less contemporary to the publication of Proba's cento, but almost nothing is known of this first basilica and its dedication. The famous legend about snowfall in August at the future location of the basilica is from the thirteenth century; see Sible de Blaauw, 'In the Mirror of Christian Antiquity: Early Papal Identification Portraits in Santa Maria Maggiore', in *Example or Alter Ego? Aspects of the Portrait Historié in Western Art from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. by Jos Koldeweij, Rudi van Leeuwen, and Volker Manuth (Turnhout and Nijmegen: Brepols, 2016). Cf. also Sible de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor: Liturgie en architectuur in laatantiek en middeleeuws Rome, Basilica Salvatoris, Sanctae Mariae, Sancti Petri* (Delft: Eburon, 1987), pp. 165–68 in particular. Although no traces of the veneration of Mary in fourth-century Rome remain, she must have been a popular saint in an early stage already. Veneration is attested in Constantinople around 400. For an overview of the cult of Mary in early Christianity see Josef Höfer and Karl Rahner, *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2009), s.v. Maria, Mutter Jesu; Marienfeste; Marienverehrung.
- 24 Jerome is exemplary in this respect. Not only the image of the city of Jerusalem, but also that of cities in general was a complex one: see Antin, *La ville chez saint Jérôme*.
- 25 v. 443. The term *domus Dei* was also a biblical term used to indicate the Christian basilica, although it never became a general word for such a building, see Christine Mohrmann, 'Les dénominations de l'église en tant qu'édifice en grec et en latin au cours des premiers siècles chrétiens', *Sciences Religieuses*, 36 (1962), 155–74, p. 164 in particular.
- 26 In both cases the holiness of the building is emphasized: *hae sacrae sedes* (v. 570) and *hae nobis* [*sc.* God and Christ] *propriae sedes* (v. 576).
- 27 De Blaauw, 'Pralende schrijn', pp. 131–32 with Sible de Blaauw, 'The Church Atrium in Rome as a Ritual Space: The Cathedral of Tyre and St Peter's in Rome', in *Ritual and Space in the Middle Ages: Proceedings of the 2009 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by Frances Andrews (Donington, Lincolnshire: Shaun Tyas, 2011), pp. 30–43.
- 28 Cullhed, p. 179 (discussion of vv. 566–79 on pp. 178–80). *Aeneid*, VII. 170 was also used in *De ecclesia* 1, another late antique cento. Cf. Nicholas Horsfall, *Virgil, 'Aeneid' 7. A Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. 147 on the Vergilian number: 'C. (*centum*) is a conventional large number [...]'. Proba's combining of *Aeneid*, VII. 178 and VII. 170 makes it most likely that she had this Vergilian passage in mind, although *centum columnis* also occurs in Statius's *Silu.*, IV. 2. 18 (where the number is negated) and Martial, *Epigr.*, II. 14. 9 (where it refers to an actual building with hundred columns on the forum, the so-called *Hekatonstylon*).
- 29 According to Josephus, the temple built by Herod had 162 columns (*Antiquitates judaicae* 15. 414). In Ezekiel's description of the new Temple (Ezekiel 40–43), no number of columns is mentioned. See on the Temple Andreas J. M. Kropp, *Images and monuments of Near Eastern Dynasts, 100 BC–AD 100* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 263–75 and Hershel Shanks, *Jerusalem's Temple Mount: From Solomon to the Golden Dome* (New York and London: Continuum, 2009).
- 30 See Shanks, *Jerusalem's Temple Mount*, pp. 53–58.
- 31 Cf. e.g. 1 Kings 5. 8; 5. 10; 6. 9–10; 6. 15–18. Proba acts again in a similar way as the poet she imitates. Just as Vergil took recourse to the forefathers of Latinus, the poetess refers to the biblical ancestors of the Chris-

- tians: the Jews and their culture, described in the Old Testament.
- 32 Maybe one of the other temptations – that of earthly wealth (Luke 4. 5–8) – also plays a role.
- 33 Cf. Opelt, p. 202: ‘Als mauerumgebene Stadt selbst von den Hügeln Ölberg und Golgotha flankiert, als topographische Realität ist lediglich Jerusalem geschildert. [...] Iuvenicus hat zu Jerusalem kein neutrales Verhältnis. Es hat für ihn eine doppelte Bedeutung: es ist die Stadt des Tempels und die Stadt der Passion’. According to *ibid.*, p. 205, the raising of Lazarus should be considered to be in Jerusalem, but this is only based on Iuvenicus’s lack of geographical references (the event took place in Bethany: John 11. 1).
- 34 Therefore, the remark by Christine Mohrmann, ‘La langue et le style de la poésie chrétienne’, *Revue des études latines*, 25 (1947), 280–97, p. 286 on Iuvenicus, *euang.* 1. 10 where Gabriel visits Zachariah in the temple (‘On ne saurait dire que le poète ait choisi *adytum*, mot d’une couleur poétique très spéciale, parce qu’il voulait éviter *templum*’) seems doubtful. In *euang.* 1. 298 and 1. 301 the word *aedes* is used for the temple. The status of the Jewish temple was incomparable to that of Christian churches in Iuvenicus’s time, see Sotinel, p. 420.
- 35 *Hier. in Math.*, 2 ad 13. 1. Less elaborate but similarly Origen, see Manlio Simonetti, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament Ia. Matthew 1–13* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2001), p. 263 (not mentioning Jerome). Cf. Opelt, p. 194: ‘Nach den Verheißungen und den Streitgesprächen mit den Pharisiern, die Iuvenicus wiederum nicht genau lokalisiert hat, tritt Jesus <in einer Stadt> aus dem Tempel [...]’.
- 36 Moreover, it was often used pejoratively (see *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* s.v.), especially of heretics, which might have played a role too. The word *conuenticulum* was propagated by Lactantius as a replacement of the Greek calque *ecclesia*, but he was not generally followed in this: Christine Mohrmann, ‘Les éléments vulgaires du Latin des chrétiens’, in *Études sur le Latin des chrétiens*, III (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1965), 33–66 (p. 50, n. 54).
- 37 See Poinssotte, *Juvenicus et Israël*, p. 102, n. 329 in particular (where the omission of the first part of Matthew 13. 54 in *euang.* III. 17 is not mentioned). For Poinssotte, these omissions are part of the ‘oblitération du paysage palestinien’, see *ibid.*, p. 101.
- 38 Iuvenicus uses the word *murus* only once: *euang.*, II. 445, where it is added to the biblical text of Matthew 10. 11, probably because cities (in this case a non-specified place) with walls were considered more epic than towns without. *Moenia* is used 17 times in Iuvenicus’s epic.
- 39 See Canali, Santorelli and Malaspina, *Aquilino Giovenico*, p. 388. Cf. Poinssotte, *Juvenicus et Israël*, p. 150 (with n. 524).
- 40 Cf. e.g. Psalm 51. 20 and a passage such as Ambrose’s *Apologiae David*, 1, 17. 83.
- 41 See *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* s.v.: *delubrum* can refer to the room of the cult statue, to the place of purification, but also to other parts of a temple. Cf. Ulrich Schmitzer, ‘Der symbolische Kampf um die römische Topographie im christlich-paganen Diskurs’, in *Rom und Mailand in der Spätantike. Repräsentationen städtischer Räume in Literatur, Architektur und Kunst*, ed. by Therese Fuhrer (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 237–61 (pp. 249–50), on the exclusively pagan use of the word.
- 42 *Euang.*, I. 185–88.
- 43 Anton Hilhorst, ‘The Cleansing of the Temple (John 2,13–25) in ‘Juvenicus and Nonnus’’, in *Early Christian poetry: a collection of essays*, ed. by Jan den Boeft and Anton Hilhorst (Leiden: Brill, 1993), pp. 61–76 (p. 66).
- 44 Parables: *euang.*, III. 745; IV. 181; IV. 186. It is also used metaphorically (III. 280) and for the house of a magistrate in Cana: II. 338.
- 45 See A. Betori, s.v. Betlemme, in *Temi di iconografia paleocristiana*, ed. by Fabrizio Bisconti (Vatican City: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 2010), pp. 137–38; cf. *ibid.*, s.v. Città (pp. 150–53) and Gerusalemme (pp. 186–87).
- 46 For Peter and the dog, see Roald Dijkstra, *The Apostles in Early Christian Art and Poetry* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 368–69; 474 (only Rep. 2 151 has no building). For the sarcophagus from Gerona see Manuel Sotomayor, *Sarcófagos Romano-Cristianos de España: Estudio iconográfico* (Granada: Facultad de Teología, 1975), pp. 41–66. Spanish sarcophagi were heavily influenced by Roman examples and Roman import, see Guntram Koch, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2000), pp. 519–35.
- 47 See Johannes G. Deckers, ‘Tradition und Adaption: Bemerkungen zur Darstellung der christlichen Stadt’, *Publications de l’École française de Rome*, 123 (1989), 1283–1304: seven out of fourteen cities he discusses are depicted with walls. Cf. Carlo Bertelli, ‘Visual Images of the Town in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages’, in *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by G. P. Brogiolo and Bryan Ward-Perkins (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 127–46.